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SUBJECT: USG SUPPORT FOR GHANA'S DECEMBER 7 ELECTION

SUMMARY

1. (U) USG support for the upcoming Ghanaian presidential and parliamentary elections includes \$1,164,000 in USAID and STATE funding for election-related programs. PAS has provided \$35,000 to support election programs related to the media. The final transfer of funds was presented on November 10 with Ambassadorial participation in the Electoral Commission's polling agent training. In conjunction with the broader diplomatic community, the Mission plans to send 50 volunteer observers into the field on election day. The Mission remains actively engaged with representatives from all political parties, civil society, and the GoG to encourage peaceful, free, and fair elections in 2004. End summary.

FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM ASSISTANCE UPDATE: USAID

2. (U) USAID-Ghana manages \$1,164,000 in Economic Support Funds (ESF) to support Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections this year. The breakdown of this total is as follows:

\$34,000 Ghana Association of the Blind (for tactile ballot use training)

\$50,000 Ibis/Ghana (women's participation)

\$450,000 Election Commission (voter registration support)

\$450,000 Center for Democratic Development (domestic observation and 25 parliamentary candidate forums)

\$180,000 Electoral Commission

* In conjunction with the Royal Netherlands Embassy, this program - launched on November 10 - will train polling agents to ensure that agents of political parties, candidates, and EC staff receive the same information, understand each others' roles, and avoid conflict and confusion on election day. As Ambassador Yates noted in a speech to formally donate these funds, "An effective performance by each agent at the polling centers will contribute immensely to enhancing transparency of the elections and will increase public confidence in the outcomes."

3. (U) USAID-Ghana's local government/civil society program, Government Accountability Improves Trust II (GAIT II), will support MP candidate debates in 29 constituencies as part of their effort to increase local level civil society engagement with the GoG.

4. (U) USAID-Washington is working in conjunction with IFES on an Electoral Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) project. This is a pilot project that will be run in Ghana that examines a number of potentially conflict-prone areas. IFES will partner with CDD-Ghana and the Institute for Policy Analysis in Tamale to send field monitors to conflict-prone areas. The EVER project will identify conditions, causes, practices, or failures provoking electoral violence in order to prevent, manage, or reduce opportunities for friction in elections and campaigns. The project will examine electoral conflict as a discrete form of conflict with unique causes and solutions, while recognizing that it is linked to broader social, economic, or criminal motives. In addition, it will diagnose how election observation can be a more effective tool in election conflict prevention.

FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM ASSISTANCE UPDATE: PUBLIC AFFAIRS

5. (U) The Embassy's Public Affairs Section has provided \$35,000 in election-related support, aimed primarily at media programs. The breakdown of this total is as follows:

\$10,000 Center for Democratic Development (originally slated for presidential debates, this money will be reprogrammed for other election-related support if a debate

does not take place this month)

\$10,000 Ghana Journalist's Association (issue-specific media interactions with political party leaders, focusing on issues such as the education, economy, and health)

\$15,000 Three media training workshops (held in Accra, Takoradi, and Kumasi) to work with journalists on reporting in an election year. The focus of these workshops was on broadcast journalism and touched on subjects such as polling, reporting election results, and covering political rallies.

FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM ASSISTANCE UPDATE: DHRF

16. (U) Two grants awarded from the FY04 Democracy and Human Rights Fund also supported projects cultivating a peaceful election season and greater awareness of the democratic process. These projects and allocations are as follows:

\$6,110 Women in Broadcasting (supporting programs to highlight female parliamentary candidates)

\$5,000 Berekum Civic Union (community-wide program to promote political tolerance during elections. Note: The Berekum CU is also a beneficiary of USAID-Ghana's GAIT II program ((see para 2 above)), and will be organizing MP debates under this program).

17. (SBU) The Mission's support for Ghana's elections has been widely covered in local press and well-received by most. Some representatives from civil society, as well as members of the major opposition party, the National Democratic Congress, have made comments to PolOffs about the substantial support provided to the Center for Democratic Development (CDD). Some argue that the CDD leans toward supporting the ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP). The Associate Executive Director of CDD, Mr. Baffour Agyeman-Duah, told PolOff on September 30 said that this allegation has no basis in fact. (Note: The criticism of CDD from the major opposition party reveals an aspect of Ghana's developing democracy - that there can be limited tolerance for divergent views at times. The Mission believes that CDD-Ghana is struggling to take a neutral position, and has tried to address the polarized nature of the campaign by trying to persuade all parties to focus on the issues at stake and how they will address them.)

PRE-ELECTION AND ELECTION DAY OBSERVATION

18. (SBU) Embassy officers have met with representatives of all the political parties, civil society, the Electoral Commission, and fellow members of the diplomatic corps to discuss the December 7 election and assess what useful role the USG might play. On this issue, the sentiment has been nearly unanimous: while international observers are welcome, the need for them is seen as far less pressing than it was in the 2000 elections. As one EC contact put it to PolChief "Ghana is coming of age electorally".

19. (U) Furthermore, political contacts seem more concerned about gaps in monitoring the pre-election process (e.g., the voter registration process and the EC's response to challenges) than monitoring the actual election. They do not see a significant possibility of rigging on polling day. The EC and others point to the fact that the CDD, the Catholic Church and others are fielding over 8,000 domestic observers in this election (compared to 5,000 in the 2000 election). CDD, with support from USAID, has been fielding 50 monitors to track pre-election political activities. At the same time that domestic observer numbers are rising, international observers are decreasing. While foreign missions fielded approximately 200 election observers in 2000, the UNDP told PolOff on November 5 there will be approximately 175 international observers for this year's election.

110. (U) Almost all of the Embassy's political contacts have said foreign observers can play a useful role in helping to legitimize the election result and lend support to the democratic process in Ghana. In addition to extensive pre-election regional travel and observation, the Mission will send approximately 50 American direct-hire, spouses, and FSN observers into the field, in conjunction with the wider diplomatic community. Foreign observers have been promised by other Missions in Ghana, including the British (40 observers) and the Australians/Canadians (20-30), under the coordination of the UNDP.

COMMENT

11. (U) The increasing emphasis on domestic observers (as opposed to international observers) can be taken as a sign of

increased confidence in the democratic process here. Domestic observers present distinct advantages over international observers - they often understand the country and its politics better; they have local knowledge; and they can speak local languages. The upswing in domestic observers is a strong sign of capacity development of the civil society and suggests increasing local ownership and engagement in the process. International observers remain important in places where there are limited or no domestic observers and/or where local tensions undermine the country's confidence in domestic observers.

12. (U) The Mission has played an active role in supporting free, fair, and peaceful elections in Ghana this year. USG assistance for Ghana's elections has been well-received and well-publicized. Within the Mission, over 100 personnel have expressed great interest in serving as election observers on December 7. The Mission believes their involvement builds both our public image in Ghana and morale within the Mission itself. End comment.
YATES